

II. Amendment to the Claims

This listing and version of the claims replaces all prior listings and versions of the claims.

1. (currently amended) A rectangular siding panel having front and rear faces, first and second side faces and top and bottom faces, the siding panel having a first longitudinal area of substantially uniform thickness extending for the length of the siding panel, wherein in the first longitudinal area the front and rear faces of the siding panel have parallel faces extending from the top face to an elbow along the length of the siding panel, wherein from the elbow to the bottom face the front and rear faces extend at an angle with respect to the front and rear faces in the first longitudinal area, wherein when the siding panel is secured to a wall with a bottom end thereof partially overlapping a second siding panel secured below said siding panel, the rear face in the first longitudinal area sits flush with a portion of the wall to which the siding panel is secured so that the wall can provide support for said rear face against burst fractures from fasteners driven through the first longitudinal area. ~~said panel having a region of increasing thickness extending from said top face to a transition region, said rear face in said region of increasing thickness forming a substantially planar first surface defined from said first side face to said second side face that extends, in substantially continuous planar form, from said top face to said transition region, said rear face having a substantially planar second surface occupying a majority of said rear face defined from said first side face to said second side face that extends, in substantially continuous planar form, from said bottom face to said transition region, wherein said region of increasing thickness and transition region cooperate to permit the sloped, continuous planar first surface to sit substantially flush with a portion of a vertical wall when said siding panel is secured to said vertical wall and angled to overlaps at least a portion of a second siding panel secured to said vertical wall with a portion of said rear face at a bottom end of said panel resting upon a front face of said second siding panel.~~

2. (original) The siding panel of claim 1, wherein said siding panel is a clapboard siding panel.

3. (previously presented) The siding panel of claim 1, wherein said siding panel is a fiber cement siding panel.

4. (currently amended) The siding panel of claim 1, wherein said first longitudinal area ~~region of increasing thickness~~ comprises a reinforced area comprising a mesh, scrim, fabric or panel reinforcement.

5. (canceled)

6. (currently amended) The siding panel of claim 1, wherein said first longitudinal area ~~planar first surface~~ has a height of about at least one inch.

7. (currently amended) The siding panel of claim 1, wherein, when the angle is said ~~siding panel overlaps said second siding panel, the planar second surface forms an angle with said vertical wall of~~ between about 1-10 degrees.

8. (previously presented) The siding panel of claim 4, wherein said siding panel is formed from fiber cement and said reinforcement is embedded within or laminated to said siding panel.

9. (currently amended) A siding panel assembly, comprising:

at least first and second siding panels attached to a vertical wall of a structure, each of said siding panels being a rectangular shaped panel having front and rear faces, first and second side faces, and top and bottom faces, said first siding panel having ~~angled such that a~~ bottom end of said first siding panel overlapping ~~overlaps~~ a top end of said second siding panel, at least said first siding panel having a first longitudinal area of substantially uniform thickness extending for the length of the siding panel, wherein in the first longitudinal area the front and rear faces of the first siding panel have parallel faces extending from the top face to an elbow along the length of the siding panel, wherein from the elbow to the bottom face the front and rear

faces extend at an angle with respect to the front and rear faces in the first longitudinal area such that the rear face in the first longitudinal area sits said rear face of at least said first siding panel having a reinforced area proximate to a top end of said rear face forming a sloped, substantially planar first surface defined from said first side face to said second side face that extends, in substantially continuous planar form, from said top face to a transition region and sitting substantially flush with a portion of said vertical wall, said rear face having a substantially planar second surface occupying a majority of said rear face defined from said first side face to said second side face that extends, in substantially continuous planar form, from said bottom face to said transition region, wherein said first siding panel is siding panels are secured to said vertical wall at least in part by a series of fasteners extending through said first longitudinal area respective siding panels and into said vertical wall, wherein at least some of said fasteners are disposed through said planar first surface sitting substantially flush with the portion of the vertical wall, wherein said vertical wall provides support for said rear surface face against burst fractures from said fasteners.

10. (currently amended) The assembly of claim 9, wherein the first longitudinal area ~~wherein said reinforced area~~ comprises an embedded or laminated mesh, scrim, fabric or panel reinforcement.

11. (original) The assembly of claim 9, wherein said siding panels are fiber cement clapboard siding panels.

12. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 9, wherein said siding panels are installed using a blind nail method using a plurality of nails.

13. (previously presented) The assembly of claim 9, wherein said siding panels are installed using a face nail method using a plurality of nails.

14. (canceled)

15. (currently amended) The assembly of claim 9, wherein said first longitudinal area ~~planar first surface~~ has a height of at least about one inch.

16. (currently amended) The assembly of claim 9, wherein said ~~planar first surface~~ slopes at an angle that substantially matches an angle between the planar second surface and said wall created by said overlap ~~angle is between 1-10 degrees.~~

17. (currently amended) A method of installing a siding panel assembly on a vertical wall of a structure, comprising the following steps:

providing at least first and second siding panels, each of said siding panels being a rectangular shaped panel having front and rear faces, first and second side faces, and top and bottom faces, said rear face of at least said first siding panel having a first longitudinal area of substantially uniform thickness extending for the length of the siding panel, wherein in the first longitudinal area the front and rear faces of the first siding panel have parallel faces extending from the top face to an elbow along the length of the siding panel, wherein from the elbow to the bottom face the front and rear faces extend at an angle with respect to the front and rear faces in the first longitudinal area; ~~a first area proximate to a top end of said rear face forming a sloped, substantially planar first surface defined from said first side face to said second side face that extends, in substantially continuous planar form, from said top face to a transition region to sit substantially flush with said vertical wall when said first siding panel is secured to said wall and angled to overlap at least a portion of said second siding panel, said rear face having a substantially planar second surface occupying a majority of said rear face defined from said first side face to said second side face that extends, in substantially continuous planar form, from said bottom face to said transition region; and~~

attaching said first and second siding panels to said structure such that a bottom end of said first siding panel overlaps a top end of said second siding panel, wherein the rear face of the

first siding panel in the first longitudinal area ~~said first surface~~ sits substantially flush with the vertical wall,

wherein said attaching step comprises driving a series of fasteners through said first siding panel, through said first longitudinal area ~~planar first surface~~ and into said vertical wall, and

wherein said vertical wall provides support for said rear face ~~surface~~ against fracture during said driving step.

18. (canceled)
19. (previously presented) The method of claim 17, wherein:
said attaching step utilizes a blind nail attachment method.
20. (canceled)
21. (canceled)
22. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein said siding panels are clapboard siding panels.
23. (original) The method of claim 17, wherein said siding panels are fiber cement clapboard siding panels.
24. (currently amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the angle is ~~second planar surface forms an angle with said vertical wall of~~ between about 1-10 degrees.
25. (currently amended) A rectangular shaped clapboard siding panel having a longitudinal length substantially greater than its height and having front and rear faces, first and second side faces and top and bottom faces, the clapboard siding panel having a first longitudinal

area of substantially uniform thickness extending for the longitudinal length of the siding panel and having a height of at least about 1.0 inch, wherein in the first longitudinal area the front and rear faces of the siding panel have parallel faces extending from the top face to an elbow along the longitudinal length, wherein from the elbow to the bottom face the front and rear faces extend at an angle with respect to the front and rear faces in the first longitudinal area, wherein the rear face in the longitudinal area is a continuous, uninterrupted planar surface arranged for continuous flush engagement with a vertical wall of a structure across the longitudinal length of the siding panel when the siding panel is secured to the vertical wall with a bottom end thereof partially overlapping a second siding panel secured below said siding panel such that the vertical wall can provide support for said rear face against burst fractures from fasteners ~~said front face being substantially planar, said rear face having a substantially continuous planar first surface defined from said first side face to said second side face sloped with respect to said front face that extends, in substantially continuous planar form, from said top face to a transition region, and a substantially continuous planar second face occupying a majority of said rear face defined from said first side face to said second side face that extends, in substantially continuous planar form, from said bottom face to said transition region, wherein said sloped face is angled such that the substantially continuous planar first face sits substantially flush with a portion of a vertical wall when said siding panel is secured to said vertical wall with said substantially continuous planar second face overlapping at least a portion of a second siding panel secured to said vertical wall, such that said vertical wall provides support for said rear face when fasteners are driven through said clapboard siding panel and into said vertical wall through said first longitudinal area.~~

26. (currently amended) The siding panel of claim 25, wherein said ~~substantially continuous planar second face is angled with respect to said substantially continuous planar first face such that when the substantially continuous planar first face sits substantially flush with said portion of said vertical wall the substantially continuous planar second face forms an angle is~~ with said vertical wall of between about 1-10 degrees.

27-29. (canceled)

30. (previously presented) The siding panel of claim 25, wherein said siding panel is a fiber cement siding panel.